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C O N F I D E N T I A L ABUJA 003296

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [SOCI](#) [KISL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PINR](#) [KPAO](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: PROTESTS AND PRAYERS IN KATSINA

REF: TD-314/32127-02

Classified by DCM Timothy D. Andrews. Reason 1.5 (D).

1. (U) Peaceful protests have been taking place recently in Nigeria's northern Katsina state, reportedly sponsored by the "Shi'ite" Muslim Brotherhood, among others. Taking place before and after Friday's Juma'at prayers, the number of protests increased during the Holy month of Ramadan. According to press reports, some of the signs carried by protesters include "Death to America," "Death to Israel," and "No to America's Middle East Policy." One protestor told a national newspaper that the aim of the protests was to convince the GON to change its foreign policy towards the U.S. and the U.K. because they are "enemies of Islam" and against Nigeria's putative Muslim majority.

2. (U) A Sunni group, Izalatu Bid'a wa Ikamatus Sunna (Izala), has also been sponsoring prayers in mosques throughout the state. Anti-American diatribes were reportedly strongest at the Kofar Kaura Juma'at Mosque, where the "wrath of God" was invoked against America and its allies, notably Israel, Britain and Russia.

3. (U) Press reports identified the following clerics with the prayers and protests:

- Chief Imam Sheikh Muhammed Sani Kerau
- Sheikh Yakubu Musa
- Ustaz Abdullah Yusuf Filin Samji
- Ustaz Khalid Yunus
- Ustaz Abdul Basir Unguwar Kawo Kankara.

4. (C) NOTE: Izala is a Wahabbi-influenced movement founded in 1978 by the late Sheikh Abubakar Mahmud Gumi. It has a large presence in major northern population centers. The Izala use modern teaching methods to impart traditional, essentially conservative, religious precepts. Izala has become more activist in recent years; its members were key players in the successful drive to establish Sharia-based criminal codes in a dozen northern states. On the other hand, Nigeria's Muslim Brothers are commonly called "Shi'ites" because of their leader, Ibrahim el-Zakzaky's longstanding ties to Iran. The Muslim Brothers have a long tradition of political activism (e.g., protest marches). END NOTE.

5. (C) COMMENT: For more information on Sheikh Musa, see reftel. The continuing violence in the Palestinian territories fuels the erroneous but nearly universal perception that the USG is entirely unsympathetic to the Palestinian desires for self-determination and an end to Israeli occupation. Because of this, hardline Islamic leaders find a fertile field in northern Nigeria to sow the seeds of anti-American sentiment. Additional Mission reporting on Northern views of the U.S., including a response to State 251043, is being prepared.

JETER